

Mr. Anderson

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The following account of the incidents that took place in Prague on January 17 and 18, after which Sergeant Danko and Corporal Vanier were withdrawn from Czechoslovakia, is drawn from the reports of the Canadian Charge d'Affaires, Mr. John A. Irwin, the Canadian Air Attache, Group Captain R. A. Cameron, and the two men themselves.

On the afternoon of January 17, when Sergeant Danko left his apartment house with his wife, he saw at the street door three roughly-dressed and threatening-looking individuals who seemed to be taking considerable interest in him. He did not know who they were but feared some trouble for himself. When he returned home later in the afternoon he took the precaution of having with him Corporal Vanier and another member of the Legation staff. The three men he had seen before he now found inside the building in front of his apartment door. He asked them if they were police and what they were doing there. They replied that they were not police and were waiting to see a lawyer who lived on the same floor. They asked for no identification and offered none; nor when asked would they identify themselves.

That evening at 8:30 Danko and Vanier were in the Danko apartment with Mrs. Danko and a party of four ladies. About 9 o'clock they left the flat. Mrs. Danko was left behind in the apartment. At the door of the apartment house one of a watching trio accosted the leading pair and spoke in Czech, apparently asking for identification cards. One of the men was ill-advised enough to lay a hand on a girl in the party. Vanier demanded to see the man's own identification papers and when he would not produce them but insisted on interfering, Vanier brushed him aside. This caused him to stumble and fall. Vanier pulled him up by the coat and warned him to make off, which he and his companions did. The latter did not offer to interfere in any way. The man's coat was torn, but so little disturbance was caused by his fall that Sergeant Danko, who was standing nearby, did not know of the fall until he was later told by Vanier.

On the following day, January 18, Sergeant Danko left the Canadian Legation at about 5:00 p.m. to go home. As he drove up in front of his apartment house a number of tough-looking individuals appeared, whereupon Danko prudently returned to the Legation. The Charge d'Affaires, the Air Attache and another officer of the Legation then accompanied Sergeant Danko to his apartment before which they found gathered on the street a small crowd of men, with whom was one uniformed policeman. They stopped and questioned the policeman and learned that there was some question of Vanier having torn the coat of one of the men during the incident of the previous evening.

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The Canadian party then withdrew again taking Danko with them. Later in the evening at about 10:30 p.m. the Air Attache returned to the Danko apartment bringing Danko and Vanier with him. There was at that time one uniformed policeman on the street but no one else in evidence.

A little later when the Air Attache descended from seeing Danko to his apartment on the fifth floor, he found a number of watchers, perhaps ten in all, tucked into various corners of the corridors. He then went to a nearby police station where he complained about this apparently hostile body of unidentified persons and asked for some police protection for Danko. The attitude of the police was uncooperative but they finally assured the Air Attache that some one would be immediately instructed to look into the matter.

However, by the next day, January 19, the number of un-uniformed watchers in Danko's apartment building had considerably increased.

Neither from their dress, words or actions did the individuals involved in these incidents appear to have any official authority. At no time was there any use or display of firearms. Neither of the Canadians ever carried arms.

During the forenoon of January 19 the Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs delivered to the Canadian Legation a note demanding that Danko and Vanier leave Czechoslovakia within 12 hours, on the ground that their behaviour represented an "abuse of hospitality".

So far as the Canadian staff in Prague is concerned, this incident was the climax of a series of steps taken by the Czech Government during the past few weeks. They were all aimed, without any well-founded reason, at embarrassing the normal routine and work of the Canadian Legation.

Last October, of two locally employed members of the Canadian Legation, themselves Czechs, one was suddenly arrested, the other denied permission to continue working with the Legation, both without good cause given.

Early in January Sergeant Danko was accused without a shadow of evidence of organizing espionage and of paying "considerable sums" for information. As was announced earlier, he was declared persona non grata and requested to leave Czechoslovakia "within a reasonable time".

This was followed by the incidents involving Sergeant Danko and Corporal Vanier recounted above. After reading the reports of the Canadian officials in Prague and hearing the account given by the two Canadian N.C.O.'s, the Canadian Government is convinced that the charges are false and that the interference with Danko and Vanier was deliberate.

On January 23 the Czech Charge d'Affaires in Ottawa was asked to call at the Department of External Affairs. Mr. Klima was then informed by the Under-Secretary that this interference with the Canadian staff in Prague was wholly unwarranted. He was requested to ascertain from his Government if it was their intention deliberately to embarrass the work of the Canadian Legation in Prague. No reply has been received to this inquiry.

In the circumstances, the Government approved yesterday the immediate despatch to the Czechoslovakian Charge d'Affaires in Ottawa of a note requiring that two members of the staff of the Legation leave Canada within seven days from the delivery of the note.

The two employees in question are Hugo Bohounek, clerk to the Commercial Attache, and Richard Bergmann, bookkeeper.